

THE PARADIGM OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND IMPACT OF SHGS IN INDIAN FISHERIES SECTOR: AN EPHEMERAL DEPICTION

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Abstract

A study was made on the impact of 1000 selected 'Self Help Groups' (SHGs) in gender mainstreaming in marine fisheries sector. Their level of performance and extent of empowerment were assessed through appropriate indices of measurement based on data from SHGs of 30 different fishery based micro enterprises from 5 maritime states of India such as Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The gender analysis and economic feasibility analysis based on personal interview and focus group interaction meetings with members of SHGs were undertaken. The male and female counterparts of the families of respondents were separately interviewed to assess the gender mainstreaming impact in terms of equity and equality to access and control over the resources, participation profile, decision making, gender need analysis etc. Analysis of data was essentially done with descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, percentages, etc. As practical extension part, organized 250 fisherfolk interaction meetings and imparted 100 Entrepreneurial Capacity Building (ECB) Training programmes for the SHGs on the identified micro enterprises by HRD intervention programmes. The major micro enterprises of the SHGs studied were cage culture, bivalve farming, fish aggregating devices, Chinese dip net, clam processing, fish fertilizer, fish amino acid, fish drying, seaweed culture, aqua tourism, seafood kitchen, value addition, fish vending, fish marketing, ornamental fish, ready to eat and cook items, fish feed, aquaponics etc. Economic Feasibility analysis was done for the fishery based micro enterprises accomplished by SHGs and developed Business Plans of the microenterprises representing the indicative economics projecting the break even and payback period of micro-enterprises. Documented 100 success cases on ECB of SHGs with special reference to gender perspective. Brought out 25 video documentaries as Gender Mainstreaming series on Impact of SHGs in Marine Fisheries Sector as success case studies elucidated which can be used as case model for promoting group action and as a practical manual for mobilizing SHGs in any key areas on a sustainable basis.

Key words: Gender mainstreaming, Self Help Group, Empowerment index, Performance level

Introduction

The paradigm of 'Gender Mainstreaming' essentially emphasizes on judging the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a stratagem for making women's and men's concerns and experiences a vital dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. Williams *et al.* (1995) traced the sequence of events leading to the involvement of Women in Fisheries programme and to the move towards Gender and Fisheries initiatives and some gender issues besetting the fisheries sector highlighted such as poverty, division of household labour, health, access to education and other rights, organizational culture and raising awareness and sharing knowledge. For the global community, gender equality is also a commitment, embedded in international human rights agreements and in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (FAO, 2011, 2017).

The quintessence of GM stresses on a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The eventual goal is to achieve gender equality (ECOSOC, 1997). UNESCO (2000) gave a three-step approach to women's empowerment and gender equality consists of, GM perspective in all policy planning, programming, implementation and evaluation activities; promoting the participation of women at all levels and fields of activity, giving particular attention to women's own priorities and perspectives in redefining both the goals and means of development; and developing specific programmes and activities for the benefit of girls and women, particularly those that promote equality, endogenous capacity-building and full citizenship. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality and equity which aims to transform the mainstream at all levels to end gender discrimination. Equity is the 'means' and equality is the 'result'. Equality is rights based in such a way that women and men have equal rights, protected

in international standards and treaties and should have same entitlements and opportunities. Equity means justice so that resources are fairly distributed, taking into account the diverse needs of women and men (Charlesworth, 2005, Kelly, 2005). Here in the present study, an attempt was made on the assessment of impact of SHGs on various fishery based microenterprises on gender mainstreaming in the selected maritime states of India.

Materials and Methods

Under the project 'Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective of SHGs in Indian Fisheries sector' an attempt was made to assess the impact of 1000 Self Help Groups in fisheries sector on 30 fishery based micro enterprises from 5 maritime states of India such as Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha in gender mainstreaming in marine fisheries sector. The level of performance and extent of empowerment of the SHGs were measured through developed indices. The methodology adopted for the study was a pragmatic and sensible combination of extension research and practical extension management. The practical extension management part for the present study consisted of Awareness and Entrepreneurial Capacity Building (ECB) Training programmes systematically executed and then extension research part concentrated on socio economic surveys with a pre-tested and structured data gathering protocol with standardized scales and indices.

With the assistance of State departments and NGOs, the research team of the Centre of Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) visited the conspicuous locations of SHGs and conducted communication conclaves and interaction programmes for the SHG members. A series of farmer collaboration conclaves were organized for the identified SHGs engaged in 30 different fishery based micro enterprises. Done the gender analysis and economic feasibility analysis based on personal interview and focus group interaction meetings with SHG members. The male and female counterparts of the families were separately interviewed to assess the gender mainstreaming impact in terms of equity and equality to access and control over the resources, participation profile, decision making, gender need analysis etc. Data analysis was done with descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency, percentages etc.

The Level of Performance of SHGs (NABARD, 2007, Shalumol, 2015) was evaluated by the checklist agenda containing the parameters developed by NABARD such as Group size, Type of members, Number of meetings, Timings of meetings, Attendance of members, Participation of members, Savings collection within the group, Amount to be saved, Interest on internal loan, Utilization of savings amount by SHG, Loan recoveries, Maintenance of books, Accumulated savings, Knowledge of the rules of SHG, Education level, Knowledge of Govt. programmes etc. arranged in 3 point continuum. Likewise the 'Empowerment Index' was computed based on 8 dimensions (Meena *et al*, 2012) such as Confidence building, Self-esteem, Decision making pattern, Capacity building, Psychological Empowerment, Social Empowerment, Economic Empowerment and Political Empowerment. The extent of empowerment was measured as the difference between the scores obtained as per the perception of the SHG members before and after joining the SHG. For calculating the Empowerment Index, the scores obtained for each dimensions were first made uniform and that was multiplied by the weightages assigned by the judges while relevancy rating for ascertaining the content validity of the scale through scale product method. Each of the dimension of Empowerment Index was computed by the scores of the sub-dimensions coming under the categories of these 8 dimensions. The Empowerment Index and Level of Performance of SHGs were quantified with the standardized interview schedules.

As the practical extension part, imparted 100 Entrepreneurial Capacity Building (ECB) Training programmes on the identified micro enterprises by appropriate HRD intervention programmes and organized 250 fisherfolk interaction meetings. Stage by stage video documentation in the various segments of activities of SHG was also done. Done the Economic Feasibility analysis of 30 fishery based micro enterprises accomplished by SHGs, and 30 allied sector microenterprises, captured video and developed Business Plans of the microenterprises. For the economic feasibility analysis, the Average

Operating cost for the SHG enterprise was first calculated and then the Average Annual Net Return was estimated. After computing the total Fixed Cost, the Break Even Point (BEP) of the enterprise was computed as Fixed Asset / (Profit per unit—Variable cost per unit). The Pay Back Period (PBP) i.e the years the unit takes to break even was estimated as Initial Investment / Net Profit, which was found to be the number of years or time period for the product to reach the breakeven point which indicated the profitability of that particular enterprise. (Vipinkumar *et al*, 2018, 2020). The main constraints faced by the women entrepreneurs while doing the different income generating activities related to fisheries were analysed for making strategic recommendations.

Results and Discussion

Empowerment Index components and Level of Performance of SHGs

The Empowerment Index and Level of Performance of SHGs were assessed during the 250 fisherfolk interaction meetings organized and 100 Entrepreneurial Capacity Building (ECB) training programmes conducted for the SHGs on various micro enterprises by HRD intervention programmes undertaken as the practical extension part of the project of CMFRI and also through personal interviews with SHG members for systematic data collection accomplished by the trained enumerators. For each SHG, the score obtained for the dimensions of Empowerment Index contributing the Overall empowerment Index and Level of Performance of the SHGs were quantified with the standardized data gathering protocols and are presented in Table 1. It is apparent from the table that, among the 8 dimensions on empowerment, the Economic dimension has highest average score (0.835) followed by Self Esteem (0.798) and Psychological Empowerment (0.790). The overall empowerment index for the entire SHGs was 0.785 and the level of performance was 69.54 per cent. An ephemeral depiction on the average Level of Performance and Empowerment Index of SHGs of various fishery-based microenterprises with indicative economics is given in Table 2.

Table 1: Empowerment Index components and Level of Performance of SHGs (n=1000)

No	Dimensions	Average Score
1.	Confidence building	0.779
2.	Self esteem	0.798
3.	Decision making Pattern	0.740
4.	Capacity building	0.764
5.	Psychological empowerment	0.790
6.	Social empowerment	0.797
7.	Economic empowerment	0.835
8.	Political empowerment	0.779
	Overall Empowerment Index (Average)	0.785
	Level of Performance (Average)	69.54 per cent

Economic Feasibility Analysis of Micro enterprises of SHGs

The Economic Feasibility Analysis of the various microenterprises handled by SHGs was undertaken by gathering data for the last 3 years on expenditure and returns to project the indicative economics of the SHG enterprises. The average operating cost and average net returns were worked out and the significant components assessed were the Break Even Point (BEP) and Pay Back Period (PBP) of these enterprises. The results are also presented in Table 2. For the economic feasibility analysis, the Average Operating cost for the SHG enterprise was first computed and then the Average Annual Net Return was assessed. Thereafter, as specified in the methodology, after calculating

the total Fixed Cost, the BEP of the enterprise was estimated and the PBP i.e the years the unit takes to break even was assessed, which was the time period in number of years for the product to reach the breakeven point which in turn underscored the profitability of that particular enterprise. Based on this economic feasibility analysis, documented 100 success cases on ECB of SHGs with special reference to gender perspective and also brought out 25 video documentaries as Gender Mainstreaming series on Impact of SHGs in marine fisheries sector as success case studies (4 shortlisted in Women in seafood international video contest).

Table 2: Performance level, Empowerment Index and Economic Feasibility analysis of fishery based micro enterprises (n=1000)

No	Micro Enterprise (Fisheries)	No of SHGs = 1000	Avg. Level of Performance	Avg. Empowerment Index	Break Even Point	Pay Back Period (Years)
1	Fish Fertilizer unit	20	72.8	0.82	1145 kg	1
2	Chinese dip net unit	12	79.2	0.89	1800 kg	1.7
3	Aqua-tourism unit	15	78.9	0.88	29938 units	3

4	Clam processing unit	75	57.3	0.68	8004 kg	2
5	Pickling unit	75	72.3	0.83	3680	0.8
6	Fish drying unit	60	70.0	0.78	4240	0.9
7	Fish Cold Storage unit	18	70.0	0.8	3730 kg	1.02
8	Fish vending unit	70	69.2	0.78	11,300 kg	1.27
9	Mussel culture unit	60	76.0	0.84	95.29	1
10	Oyster culture unit	60	75.9	0.82	1132 units	1
11	Prawn culture unit	30	59.6	0.69	650kg	1
12	Quarry fish culture unit	20	58.8	0.64	649 kg	1.8
13	Cage farming unit	50	72.2	0.82	187 kg	1
14	Ornamental fish culture unit	60	54.5	0.67	221633 fries	1.28
15	Pearlspot culture unit	15	67.5	0.78	30 kg	1
16	Tilapia culture unit	15	65.5	0.76	50 kg	1
17	Bivalve collection unit	30	69.2	0.77	8000 kg	2
18	Seaweed farming unit	30	77.6	0.86	10080 kg	1
19	Fish Amino unit	22	75.4	0.84	361 units	0.85
20	Ready to Eat Fish Products	25	74.4	0.83	7680 units	1
21	Ready to Cook Fish Products	25	71.4	0.81	4833 kg	1.24
22	Crab Processing unit	25	68.3	0.77	3086 kg	0.92
23	Aquaponics unit	40	60.2	0.71	380 kg	0.35
24	Fish feed production unit	20	59.3	0.61	1900 kg	056
25	Seafood Kitchen unit	18	78.7	0.88	34618	3
26	Fish procuring unit	40	79.5	0.87	12000 kg	1.2
27	Pearlspot seed production Unit	10	67.5	0.79	150000 fries	1
28	Paddy cum fish culture	30	74.9	0.83	-	-
29	Fish Aggregating Devices (Social Entrepreneurship)	10	80.0	0.89	-	-
30	Hand picking- fishing unit	20	50.1	0.61	-	-

The Table 2 can be used as a ready reckoner on the type of microenterprises projecting BEP and PBP which gives a distinct picture about the type of the microenterprises suitable based on this indicative economics. Those enterprises with less than 1-year PBP can be chosen appropriately based on the technical feasibility, economic viability, location specificity etc. In the meantime, one enterprise pronounced in one location with a substantial BEP and PBP need not necessarily replicate the same result in a different geographical location. Because the performance output of an enterprise of an SHG varies from time to time, from place to place and from situation to situation as it is influenced by a variety of factors

To put it concisely, an ephemeral depiction on a pragmatic assessment of the various fishery-based microenterprises (30 nos.) efficaciously being undertaken by Self Help Groups of fisherfolk from 5 maritime states of the country brought out a couple of valid suppositions. It was understood that, though the majority of the operations especially the labour intensive ones are male dominated, the female counterparts also do have a definite role in many of the conspicuous activities. The Scales of 'Performance Assessment' and 'Empowerment Index' developed for this study have good potential for future use in other key areas on a maintainable basis. Lacunae identified in Empowerment Index computation give ample and adequate feedback to authorities to proceed in the right direction. The economic feasibility analysis gives a vivid picture on the appropriateness of the microenterprises to be chosen based on Break Even Point and Pay Back Period of various fishery based enterprises for livelihood enhancement. The inferences drawn from the gender dimension analysis on mainstreaming aspect give ample sensitization on vital and crucial issues like women fisherfolk's rights and marketing channels for policies and other interpolations on gender. It could be alluded that, an exhaustive research with larger sample and wider area would be of plentiful scope. Interrelationships between the variables can act as catalytic points for group action and group empowerment on a sustainable basis. Success case lessons expounded and brought out as videos on various fishery-based technologies by the project authorities

of CMFRI can be used as a practical guidance manual for marshaling and mobilizing SHGs in similar allied segments on a sustainable basis.

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